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VALLEY CENTER MEXICAN FRUIT FLY QUARANTINE LIFTED

Cooperative effort concludes successfully less than one year after first fly was detected

VALLEY CENTER—The Mexican Fruit Fly Eradication Project in Valley Center, conducted jointly by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the San Diego County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, has completed the eradication of a Mexican fruit fly infestation and lifted the local quarantine. The declaration comes less than a year after officials first detected a heavy infestation of Mexican fruit flies in the area and quarantined local fruit crops to keep the infestation from spreading.

"Thanks to cooperation from local growers and residents, we have eradicated this infestation quickly and effectively," said CDFA Secretary William (Bill) J. Lyons, Jr. "As a farmer and rancher, I understand the hardship that a quarantine can bring to growers who must forego selling their crops while the problem is solved. When we declared this quarantine, I pledged to eradicate this pest as quickly as possible. We kept that promise."

The infestation was first detected on November 21, and the quarantine was declared on December 5, covering Valley Center and surrounding areas. During the quarantine, crops that are hosts for the pest were not allowed out of the area unless they were treated or processed as authorized. Residents and people moving through the area also were asked not to move backyard fruits out of the quarantine zone. Left untreated, the infestation would have threatened fruit crops worth over \$75 million annually.

For the first time in a California eradication program, the pesticide Spinosad was used. The product was cleared for use on organic crops. Spinosad is a naturally occurring extract from bacteria. "We were impressed with the performance of this product, and we are glad to have a new tool available for future projects," Lyons noted.

CDFA worked with the California Department of Pesticide Regulation to allow the use of the product. The cooperation of both federal and state Environmental Protection Agencies streamlined the approval process that made it available in time to aid the eradication effort. The treatments were used in conjunction with later releases of sterile Mexican fruit flies, which are used to breed any remaining wild flies out of existence. The quarantine ended with a period of intensive trapping to verify that no wild flies remain in the area.

The Mexican fruit fly is native to southern and central Mexico. The fly attacks over 40 different kinds of fruits, including many varieties of citrus and other fruit grown in the area. Damage occurs when the female fly lays eggs in the fruit.